

Ephesians

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 December 2016

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] In our scripture sheet, you will see that we are on 6C and 6D. The study regarding Paul's letter to the Ephesians is winding down.

We have arrived now at the last chapter. And in it, the Apostle Paul is explaining the necessity of believers being equipped with all of the spiritual apparatus that God has made available to us. And he likens it to a suit of armor. This, of course, is pretty much an outdated thing in one respect, yet in another respect it isn't, because while people going into combat today are not armored at all like they were in the first century, they're still armored.

And we know something about bulletproof vests and even our police using bulletproof vests now. And when men go into combat, they are outfitted with all kinds of gear and equipment that is designed to increase the possibility of their coming out of a conflict alive.

So body armor has always been a need for anyone who is facing a kind of conflict. And now the Apostle Paul is saying, listen, in the very same way that a soldier going into combat, whether it was first century with bows and arrows and spears and swords, or whether it is the 21st century, there is an enemy to contend with, and the enemy is going to be out to destroy you.

[1 : 44] And you need to be able to protect yourself from the wiles of the enemy, because the name of the game, of course, is to survive. And that's what Paul is talking about here.

He's talking about being able to live and conduct your Christian life in such a way that when the enemy, the adversary, Satan himself, comes after you, and he will, you will be able to defend yourself against him.

And when the fracas is over, you will remain standing. That's the thrust of what we're getting at here. So let's read the text, if we may.

Beginning with verse 13. Therefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.

And by the way, we are living in it right now. Because this is the day that is corrupted with evil throughout the world.

[2 : 51] We see demonstrations of it on every hand. It is all around us. Sometimes we'll be more directly involved than others. But this is the evil day. It is the day of fallenness.

It is the day that is completely contrasted with the day that God made originally, that we would describe as Edenic, that was perfect, that was unblemished and unspotted, until Adam exercised his volition and everything came crashing down.

That's the world we live in today. This is an evil day. And having done all to stand, stand therefore, stand your ground, having your loins girt about with truth.

Well, most of us don't girt our loins at all today. But what this had reference to was the kind of paraphernalia that they wore in the first century. And if you are aware of the kind of clothing that was worn by the average person of the first century, and this is for men as well as women, it was a lengthy kind of robe that came almost down to your ankles.

And it also constituted your covering or your blanket for night when you were sleeping. And under that heavy robe, you would wear a tunic, which would be the equivalent of our underwear.

[4 : 20] And that robe was long and flowing down to the ground and could provide warmth and et cetera. And yet had long baggy sleeves. And when the time came that you needed to engage in some kind of physical exercise, that thing could be very cumbersome and in your way.

So what they would do is take the sash. We would kind of call it like a cummerbund. It was a sash that wrapped around the waist maybe three, four times.

And it was perhaps anywhere from six to 12 inches wide. It was just a long sash wrapped around your waist. And this served, for the men, also served as your pocket.

Because you didn't have a pocket like we have pants pockets. And they would keep their coin purse in that sash that was wrapped around, or a knife or whatever valuables they had.

But when it came time that you had to exercise physical dexterity and you had to be able to move quickly, they would take that sash and unwind it and wrap it around.

[5 : 29] And under their thighs and their legs like that, these are your loins. And when they would gird up your loins, it would gather all of that loose material together and put it in a place that was more manageable and would allow you to move about more quickly.

This is what he's talking about when you gird up your loins. And Paul is talking about spiritual values here. And he says, have your loins girded with truth.

And when you go into battle with the enemy, this is a spiritual enemy now. We're talking about his infernal majesty, Satan himself or his minions.

You need to be able to combat him with truth. And this is exactly what Christ did when he was confronted by Satan.

Christ's response to every temptation that Satan threw at him was, it is written, it is written, it is written. And he appealed to that as his authority.

[6 : 32] And, fellas, that needs to be our authority, too. Because your reasoning and your logic are not sufficient. We need a logic and a reasoning that is beyond that of the human.

That is why we appeal to the scriptures. So that's our real only defense. That is something that Satan himself cannot contend with. Having your loins girded about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness.

That, of course, was the body armor that covered the main part of your torso from your neck to your waist or to your groin. And that was designed to deflect arrows, darts, whatever would be hurled at you, whether it was a sword flash, a knife flash, or whatever.

And this armor was that which equipped the average Roman soldier. It was very cumbersome and heavy and difficult to manage. But, at the same time, it was life-saving.

Today, we've got a miracle kind of fabric called Kevlar that is amazing. It is a lot lighter. It just fits the torso like a vest.

[7 : 44] And it has the capacity to either repel or keep bullets fired right at your chest, right at your heart, from penetrating to the extent that it would be fatal.

And many and many a life has been saved by these Kevlar vests. And it's a miraculous kind of material that technology has developed within the last 20 years or so.

That's the breastplate of righteousness. And he's talking about these things and their spiritual value. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Feet are shod because the idea is go somewhere, do something, movement. And it is this gospel of peace that brings peace with God with which our feet are to be shod.

These, of course, are all spiritual applications here. And above all, taking the shield of faith. That, too, was a large item, sometimes about two feet wide, about three or four feet long, usually constructed of a lighter weight metal, had a strap on the back that you could put your arm through, and you could hold the shield up that way so that when the arrows came in, they would hit your shield instead of hitting you.

[9 : 11] And the shield also provided a basis for physical cover because you could kneel down, you could get on your knees and have the shield there against the ground that would protect you all the way up.

And that, too, was the salvation for a lot of people in combat, kept them from being targets because the shield would stop them. The shield of faith has to do, of course, with the position that we have in Christ and our trust in him.

And with these items, Paul says, with these things, you shall be able to quench, that is, to neutralize, to keep them from being effective, all the fiery darts of the wicked.

These fiery darts of the wicked have to do with Satan's devices. Paul says, we are not ignorant of his devices.

Satan is a schemer. He's a conniver. He's a liar. He's a manipulator. And trust me when I say he knows your weakness, and he knows when to attack you at your weakness.

[10 : 23] And these are referred to as fiery darts of the wicked. These darts consist of anything and everything that is in error.

And there is so much more error out there than there is truth. And we need to keep that in mind because truth is such a precious commodity. I think it was Winston Churchill who said that truth is such a precious commodity that it has to be safeguarded with a body of lies.

Think of that. You know, when war breaks out, and I think, again, to quote Churchill, I think it was Churchill who said that whenever war breaks out, the first casualty of war is always the truth.

And we have information to be disseminated. And in times of war, we even have a department that is referred to as the department of misinformation or disinformation.

And its purpose is to disseminate lies to the enemy, to cause the enemy to believe something that is not true, and then to act accordingly on that thing which is not true that completely throws him off, so as to gain an advantage.

[11 : 53] And it is a nasty business, but truth and error are replete everywhere you go. Someone has said, How do you know there is so much more error than what there is truth?

And the answer is quite obvious. What is the right answer? What is the truthful answer to two plus two? Well, it is still four.

Now, let me ask you, How many wrong answers are there to that number? You can't count them, you know. The truth has always been in a minority.

It always will be. The truth is always up against the onslaught of a huge number of lies that oppose it.

And it has always been that way. And it probably always will until the Lord comes. So these represent the fiery darts of the wicked. There's so much error out there.

[12 : 56] It is just incredible. I'm reminded that when people are brought into the treasury department, and these people are responsible for counterfeiting, for tracking down, and prosecuting counterfeiters.

And we know that the counterfeiting of money is something that is a problem worldwide. And some have perfected that to a place now where it is really, really difficult to tell because of the technology and the improvements that have been made in copying and everything.

And it gives our treasury department nightmares because they're always trying to come up with something that counterfeiters cannot counterfeit. And it's a real difficult thing.

But years ago, before they had all of the technology that they have now, I'm told that when people were being trained to be able to spot counterfeit bills, they would spend hours and hours and hours in detail going over the original, the real bill, pointing out every nuance, every little item on it, on the front and on the back, so that they were able to get what a genuine bill really looked like down pat. And they would not allow them to see a counterfeit bill. They had to spend all of this time going over virtually with a microscope, with the real thing, and the thinking behind it was when you become so trained and so schooled with what the real thing looks like, when you do see a counterfeit, you can spot it just like that.

[14 : 49] It stands out almost like a sore thumb. Not because you've learned how to spot a counterfeit, but because you have really become schooled in the real thing.

And when you become very proficient at that, and someone slips you a counterfeit, you can spot it right away. But without becoming proficient with the real, you can't see the counterfeit and its details as clearly.

And that's the way it ought to be with believers in the truth. We need to become so familiar, and so associated, and so comfortable with the truth, that when we hear a lie, bad doctrine, wrong teaching, we can spot it a mile away, and be safeguarded against it.

This is what Paul's talking about earlier in this epistle, when he talks about growing up in Christ, becoming mature in Christ. He says, that we henceforth be no longer children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine that comes along.

And the reason he's using children there, is because children tend to be very trusting, very believing, very gullible.

[16 : 06] You can take a three or four year old, and tell him, that the moon is really made of cheese. And he'll believe you.

Because he's trusting. Because it comes from an authoritative source. My daddy says, the moon is made out of cheese. That's good enough for him. He accepts it, and believes it without question.

And, the counterpart of that is, there are Christians, people who really know, and love the Lord, and they're saved, and they're going to be in heaven when they die.

But, they are sitting ducks, for cults, for weird doctrine, for everything and anything that comes down the pike. Because they don't have the grounding that is necessary. They don't have the maturity. They don't have the armor of God. And they are not able to identify error when they hear it. They get sucked into it. And I remember, hearing my, my dear, sweet mother-in-law, who's with the Lord now, Jenny Tallarico, and she went to be with the Lord, shortly after her 100th birthday.

[17:16] But, she came to faith in Christ, in Seattle, Washington, back in the 1940s. And, she was led to the Lord. Jenny, Jenny was one of 12 children, born into a strong Roman Catholic family, and grew up that way.

And, she was led to the Lord by an older sister. And, this older sister, was led to the Lord by a next door neighbor, in Seattle, Washington, as she stood over a backyard fence, and the two women were hanging out their laundry, on a Monday, doing their laundry.

And, she led, this neighbor lady led her to Christ, and she led Barbara's mother to the Lord, and, and Barbara's mother led her to the Lord. And, she was so excited, about, the Bible.

Because, growing up, in Roman Catholic family, in the Roman Catholic church, and those of you who have Catholic background, know that, they do not place a great deal of importance, upon reading or studying the Bible.

And, she was just, couldn't get enough of it. And, she was reading the scriptures, and listening to Christian radio, and one day, there was a knock on the door. And, there was a man and woman standing there.

[18:29] And, she said, yes, can I help you? And, they said, we, we would like to come in, and study the Bible with you. She thought, oh my, this is wonderful.

And, through the door wide open, well come in. And, they came in, and brought their literature, and everything. And, they came once a week, one night a week. And, they were there for an hour or so. And, they spent all of this time in the Bible. And, eventually, things started, she started questioning things. Because, what these people were telling her, and they were Jehovah's Witnesses.

And, what they were telling her, really was different from what she was hearing on this Christian radio station, out of Seattle. And, she began questioning. And, it wasn't long until she discovered that these people were agents of error.

And, they denied the deity of Christ. They denied the bodily resurrection. They denied the Trinity. They denied a whole host of things. But, she was a new Christian. And, all she knew was, she wanted to study the Bible.

[19:36] And, these people wanted to study the Bible. What could be wrong with that? You know, well, there's a lot that could be wrong with it. So, eventually, she, got straightened around, and she told them, I'm sorry, I cannot entertain you any longer.

You are no longer welcome in my home. And, she eventually got squared away, and, became very instrumental in my coming to know the Lord back in 1956.

So, the name of the game for believers is, to be stabilized and strengthened, so that you develop discernment.

And, you are able to recognize false doctrine when you hear it, because there's a lot of it out there. There's more false doctrine than there is true doctrine. And, it's, takes its toll on people.

Any questions or comments about this? I imagine some of you could, tell some tales of your own about this. Quenching the fiery darts of the wicked.

[20:35] And, take the helmet of salvation, which is a very important piece of gear, because, that protects the most important part of your body, the head. And, we are equipped with the spiritual helmet, if you will.

It is the helmet of salvation. And, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. The sword of the spirit is our only offensive weapon.

But, it's the only one we need. It is sharper than a two-edged sword. And, it cuts both ways, piercing, dividing asunder, even to the soul of the spirit.

And, it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We're told in Hebrews 4.12. The Roman short sword, was a revolutionary weapon of its day.

And, it allowed, the Roman soldier, a kind of, fluidity of movement, and, speed, that was not possible, with the cumbersome broad sword, that most of the enemy used at that day.

[21 : 44] Because, the typical thing, to think, I suppose, militarily, or any other way, is that, bigger, is always better. But, not necessarily.

And, when the Romans, came into battle, with their enemy, they were usually confronting an enemy, that used the broad sword. And, the broad sword, was about, four feet long, and very heavy.

And, it often had to be wielded, with two hands, because of its weight. And, they would go into battle this way, swinging this thing, back and forth. And, it was so heavy, that, that one could often, find himself, off balance, in swinging it.

And, the Roman army, developed what was known, as the short sword. And, it was only about, 18 inches long. But, it was sharpened, on both sides, on both edges.

So, that he could, slice this way, and this way. And, you had a sharp edge, both ways. And, when the Roman army, went in, to meet those, with the broad swords, they decimated them.

[22 : 53] Because, they were so much faster. And, they could slice both ways, with that short sword. And, it covered a lot less space. They never had to worry, about being thrown off balance, by swinging that sword.

And, it gave them, the kind of dexterity, that the guys, with the broad swords, didn't have. And, they actually made, mincemeat of them. Sometimes, taking on a much larger group, than what they themselves were.

And, Paul, I'm confident, has the Roman short sword, in mind here, when he talks about it, being the sword of the spirit. Which is, of course, the word of God. That, again, ties in, with the truth. Because, thy word, is truth. Thy words were found, and I did eat them, the psalmist said. And, they became very part, of my being. And, they became the basis, for, contention, and for, for contact. The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always, with all prayer, and supplication, in the spirit. We never, outgrow, our need, for prayer.

[23 : 59] And, I don't think, there is any more, honorable prayer, that we can offer, to the Lord, than perpetual prayers, of thanksgiving. I've never been, a proponent, of what I call, the gimme prayers.

And yet, that's what usually, consumes, most Christian lives, is Lord, please give me this, and give me that, and give me something else. But, if we really, if we really, appreciate, our salvation, and we really have a handle, on Romans 8, 28, you will understand, that God, has already, blessed you, with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

And the most effective, prayer, that I think, we can offer, is prayers of gratitude, and thanksgiving, to God, for who he is, and what he's done, through Christ.

And everything else, pales in significance, to that. Dan? Add humility to that. I'm sorry? Add humility to that. Oh yeah, add humility to that, because, the Lord, the Lord, gives grace, to the humble.

Paul, Peter tells us, the Lord, gives grace, to the humble. And, we are to humble, ourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he, may exalt us, in due time.

[25 : 27] And, it is imperative, that we note, that we are not, to ask the Lord, to make us humble. We are to humble, ourselves.

How, do you do that? It's very simple. We humble, ourselves, when we put, others first.

We humble, ourselves, when we put, our wife, first. When we put, our neighbor, first. When we put, our brother, first.

That's, humbling, ourselves. That is, voluntarily, taking, a lesser position, than, what we extend, to someone else.

And, frankly, that is contrary, to human nature. Human nature, wants to put, ourself first. Three favorite, people of mine, are me, myself, and I.

[26 : 26] And, that's the big three. You know, after me, you come first. And, that's the typical, way of the flesh. But, we are not to be, operating in the flesh, we are to be, operating in the spirit.

And, the best formula, for that, is found in Philippians 2, when Paul said, let this mind be in you, which was also, in Christ Jesus, who though being, in the form of God, thought it not a thing, to be grasped, or clung to, to be equal with God, but, surrendered that, left that behind, made himself, of no reputation, and came down, to this earth, made in the likeness, of man, suffered death, as a man, even the death, of the cross.

Therefore, therefore, because of Christ's, humiliation, because of his, condescension, because of his, coming down, therefore, God also, hath highly, exalted him.

And, the name of the game, there is, God will exalt you, in due time, with what, is deserved, when we humble ourselves, even as Christ did, as our example.

It's a beautiful, beautiful thing. And, watching thereinto, with all perseverance, and supplication, for all saints. And, we're going to, conclude this, with this verse, because I want to say, verse 19.

[27 : 48] I have a confession, to make, regarding verse 19. I chose that, as a young man, when I was, 22 years old, I think, my freshman year, at Cedarville. I chose, Ephesians 6, 19, as my life's verse.

And, I'm embarrassed, to tell you, I didn't even, understand it then. And, I chose it, as my life's verse. And, frankly, it still is.

But, now, I understand it. At least, to a degree, that I didn't then, 60 years ago. And, I'm eager, to tell you, what my appreciation, and understanding, of it means.

Because, it is, critical, to, conducting, the Christian life, I think, as we ought to conduct it. And, I chose it then, and, it's still my life's verse, but I'll, share the other details with you.

Any other thoughts, or comments, before we, conclude? Maybe the Lord, had something to do, with you picking it. Well, yeah, you're, you're, well, it, it, it talks about, boldness, you know, Paul says, that I may, with all boldness, be, be able to speak, the word of Christ, the mystery of Christ, with all boldness.

[29 : 02] And, and that's still something, that sometimes, is hard to come by, because, we are intimidated, by others, when we would witness, a lot of times. So, we'll be talking more about that, next week, can I, yeah, Joe?

Having on the, rescue, plane of righteousness, does that mean, living, as much as you can, according to the way, that God would have you, to live? I think it does, yeah, yeah.

Do you be in the spirit, all the time, as much as you can be? Absolutely, absolutely. It means that, our life, our life is to be an open book, and, we are to conduct ourselves, in accordance with, the principles, and the standards, that are set forth in scripture, so that, we have no secrets, and we have, no fear of anything, being discovered, that, this righteousness, the breastplate of righteousness, comes from, comes from, right living, and, and, we are all capable, of right living, and we are all capable, of dipping out of it, once in a while, and engaging in wrong living, but our lives, are to be characterized, by right living, so that, we walk, circumspectly, before all men, so that, no matter what angle, people view us from, they will see the same thing, and, and that's a, precious commodity, so, all of these things, are designed, to equip us, and outfit us, for the struggle, that is out there, and it's very real.